

New York train station ceiling collapses

NEW YORK (AP) — The ceiling of a commuter train station under the World Trade Center collapsed Friday afternoon, injuring dozens of people and forcing the evacuation of one of the 110-storey landmark towers, officials said. The collapse may have resulted from an explosion in the station or the Port Authority-Hudson line. Two fires were burning in the station and heavy smoke billowed up from the subterranean station. Initial reports indicated there were more than 100 people injured in the half-hour accident. Several were apparently trapped in the rubble. "It felt like a big boom," said Lisa Hoffman, who works at the nearby World Financial Centre. "The building shook. I looked out the window to see if New Jersey had disappeared." Christopher J. O'Mara, 42, an insurance executive on the 49th floor of the evacuated tower, said his building was being evacuated. "The hallways are filled with black smoke," he said. "Even the emergency lighting is off." More than 150 firefighters were called to the scene.

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Yeltsin, Clinton likely to meet in Canada

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President Bill Clinton are likely to hold their April 4 summit in Canada, Interfax news agency said Friday. "A high-ranking source in the Foreign Ministry revealed this information to an Interfax correspondent," the agency said. The Foreign Ministry was not immediately available for comment. Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev announced Thursday in Geneva that the two leaders would hold their first meeting on April 4. German Chancellor Helmut Kohl plans his first meeting with President Clinton on March 25-26 in Washington, a government spokesman said in Bonn. Mr. Kohl will travel to U.S. capital at the invitation of Mr. Clinton, spokesman Norbert Schaefer said.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation جورنال تايمز العربي الأردني

A gets new chief
of Jordan

JORDAN (J.T.) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has appointed Brigadier Mohammad Ismael as commander of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) in Jordan. Brig. Ousdien succeeds Major-General Naim Al Khattab, who is being transferred to join the chiefs of staff. In Khattab served as commander of the PLA in Jordan for 14 years.

atar exchanges
greetings with Iraq

JORDAN (R) — Qatari leaders exchanged greetings with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Tuesday, the second anniversary of the end of the Gulf war. The official Qatari News Agency (QNA) said the emir, Sheikh Khalifa Ben Hamad Al Thani, and his son Crown Prince and Defence Minister Major-General Khalid received cables from President Saddam marking the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan. The two Qatari leaders sent similar messages to President Saddam, Qatar and Oman, which along with the other four Arab states joined the U.S.-led alliance which defeated Iraq, established some contacts in Baghdad in recent months.

raeli lawmaker
draws gun in row

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli lawmaker waved a gun to get his point across to a cab driver in a dispute over a parking place, police said Friday. Legislator Zalul Hanegev of the right-wing Likud Party told police he drew his pistol after taxidriver Avi Golani "made threatening moves" during an argument last week, police spokesman Shmuel Rubin said. Mr. Hanegev filed a complaint Wednesday with police accusing Mr. Golani of threatening him when the lawmaker told him to move from a parked space outside his party's headquarters.

arian opposition
dissident

SIRAF BASE, Iraq (R) — An anti-government dissident Friday buried one of his members found dead in Turkey and vowed revenge of the Iranian government. Amid outbreaks of Allah Akbar and calls for the overthrow of the government of President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq buried Ali Akbar Ghorbani at biggest base in Iraq. "Our revenge will come when we return to Tehran and topple the mullahs' tyrannical regime," said a spokesman Fared alaimani. Ghorbani was kidnapped in Istanbul on June 4 and his mutilated body was found last month.

Egyptian flight lands
ith dangling body

EGYPT (AP) — An Egyptian liner landed at Lagos airport with a man's body hanging from nose bay, officials said Friday. Flying Commander John Ojukutu, military commander at Lagos' international airport, said he suspected foul play. He told reporters he was flying Egyptian planes from Libya until the airline moved the unidentified body to Nigeria. Egyptian Flight 585 landed in Lagos on Thursday from Cairo after making a stop in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The 767 was detained for two hours while its captain, Sheriff, was questioned about the body found dangling at the nose housing the front wheel of aircraft. The captain reportedly claimed he was unaware the body until he was alerted in by an Egyptian ground crew.

U.S. Embassy spokesman Peter Kovach declined all comment on the matter.

Earlier, Mr. Nazzal, and Mr. Ghoshe met with the British, French, Italian and German ambassadors.

The contacts pointed to a diplomatic offensive launched by Hamas to secure wider involvement in Middle East politics, capitalising on the publicity it has gathered since Israel expelled some 400 suspected Muslim fundamentalists in December.

The evictees have been stranded in a frigid tent camp in southeast Lebanon, with little

Syria to convene Arab meeting on how to relaunch peace process

Christopher reports Syrian pledge of support for bid to restart talks; Palestinians say April round invitations premature

Combined agency dispatches

SYRIA SAID Friday it would convene a meeting of the Arab states in Damascus shortly to discuss how to relaunch the Middle East peace process and solve the crisis sparked by Israel's Dec. 17 expulsion of Palestinians to Lebanon.

In other developments related to the peace process:

— U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who ended a week-long visit to the Middle East Thursday, said he had received Syrian assurances that Damascus would support efforts to resume the stalled Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Palestinian peace negotiators said it was too early to resume the peace talks and Israeli leaders expressed hope that Arab-Israeli peace could be achieved in one year.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which guides the Palestinian negotiators, said it was premature for the U.S. and Russia — co-sponsors of the peace process — to issue invitations to resume

peace talks in April, but American proposals to resolve the crisis over the expellees were welcome.

Jordan and Lebanon, the other parties to the peace talks, reserved comment on prospects for the resumption of peace talks.

Israeli leaders refrained from public comment before the invitations were issued, and media reports said they expected the talks to resume April 19.

A senior Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Israel was "definitely encouraged" by this announcement. We are looking forward to receiving the invitations so that the (peace) process can continue," Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa said in Brussels.

"We, as an Arab side, are going to convene a coordination meeting for the Arab side in Damascus within the coming days or weeks in order to come up with a unified Arab position vis-a-vis the deportations issue and the resumption of the peace talks."

He was speaking after meeting Danish Foreign Minister Niels Helweg Petersen, representing the European Community's (EC)

negative aspects. The security of those actions is not assured."

The main risk to an aerial operation is the threat of anti-aircraft fire from forces on the ground.

But Mr. Christopher, speaking to reporters after the 2½ hour meeting, said he was "encouraged — not at all disappointed — by the response."

"I did not come here to ask for their participation in the air-drops," he said. "We would welcome other countries' participation. Some may be coming along."

He said Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, at a meeting Thursday in Geneva, did not rule out Russian participation in the air-drops.

Mr. Christopher, winding up a week-long trip to the Middle East, met with the allies for the first time since becoming U.S. secretary of state.

He promised that Washington would maintain enough soldiers in Europe so that they would be "equal to the challenge of the new security environment."

Europeans fear that President Bill Clinton will make deep cuts in U.S. troops stationed in Europe as part of efforts to reduce government spending.

NATO allies back U.S. airdrop plan in Bosnia

BRUSSELS (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher Friday gave the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies details of the U.S. plan to parachute food to besieged villages in Bosnia but got only minor pledges of help.

Christopher used a get acquainted session with foreign ministers of the 16-nation NATO to rally support for the humanitarian programme.

Diplomats offered much praise but little assistance.

Italy said one of its air bases could be used in the operation. And NATO said its AWACS surveillance planes, already monitoring a "no-fly" zone over Bosnia, would support the airdrop.

"I admire the Americans because they have the courage to do that," said German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel.

Britain and France said their nations' troops would continue escorting relief convoys by land to victims of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"The one effort supplements the other," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said. "They go hand in hand."

Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes said the operation was risky. "Everybody knows there are

Exiles say no peace talks before end to their plight

MARJ AL ZOHOUR, Lebanon (Agencies) — The spokesman for the nearly 400 Palestinian exiles said Friday that the stalled Middle East peace talks would not resume before their plight was resolved.

For the Arabs, a settlement for the (expellees) issue is the basis for rejoining the negotiations," Gaza physician Abdul Azziz Rantisi said.

"If no solution has been found before the talks begin, we will have to ask for financial compensation," added Dr. Rantisi, without elaboration.

Dr. Rantisi, 45, said the Palestinian delegation would lose credibility if it went to the negotiations before the evictees returned.

The Palestinian delegation will definitely fall if it resumes the negotiations before resolving the crisis because the Palestinian people

refuses that," he said.

The evictees have been stranded in their makeshift tent camp in southeast Lebanon since Israel expelled them Dec. 17.

Lebanon has refused to take the men or allow supplies to reach them through its army lines, insisting they were Israel's responsibility.

Exile applauds Jordan

The expellees Thursday praised His Majesty King Hussein's firm stand towards the United Nations Security Council resolutions and his unwavering support for the expellees.

In a message addressed to King Hussein, the expellees praised his stand against eviction and expulsion, and hailed the position of the Jordanian government, Parliament and people towards the expellees.

Abed Rabbo group calls on Hamas to join PLO ranks

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Tunis-based Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) celebrated the 24th anniversary of the group by calling on the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas to join the ranks of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) unconditionally.

"Events of the past two months have proven that the PLO is the sole representative of all the Palestinian people. Hamas should thus join the PLO ranks today and unconditionally accept the umbrella of the PLO," said a statement sent to the Jordan Times by the DFLP organisers Friday.

As the sole representative of the Palestinian people, the "PLO should be directly involved in the peace talks," said the statement by the group, which is headed by PLO Executive Committee member and information chief Yasser Abed Rabbo.

Hamas has demanded that the PLO offer it a minimum number of the seats on the Palestine National Council (PNC) in return for coming under the PLO umbrella.

The Tunis-based DFLP wing had been sceptical of the need to have Hamas join the PLO. But after the apparent increase in Hamas's popularity in the wake of Israel's expulsion in December of some leading Hamas activists, DFLP officials now deem it politically necessary.

called for a speeding-up of the peace process and called on the U.S. to reopen a dialogue with the PLO leadership in Tunis.

The DFLP wing refused to change its name after breaking away in September 1991 from the Marxist-Leninist DFLP which is based in Damascus. The Tunis-based wing is represented in the Palestinian negotiating team to the Middle East peace talks.

"We urge the U.S. to reopen the dialogue with the representatives of the Palestinians. There is no need for back-door dialogue any longer. Everyone knows the PLO is directing Palestinian policies at the peace table," said the statement.

Known as the DFLP — Abed Rabbo wing among Palestinians, the group recently wing agreed to represent in the PLO the first full-fledged Palestinian party based to the occupied territories.

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(Continued on page 5)

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Sanctions grind Iraqis down, even reach elite

By Victoria Graham
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq — For most Iraqis, U.N. sanctions, scarcity and an annual inflation rate of 8,000 per cent have drained all pleasure from life. There is not even sugar for the national sweet tooth.

Once upon a time, before the Gulf war, Tawfik's little girl Amira would rush laughing into her father's arms when he came home from work, squirming through his pockets for the candy he always brought.

These days, his pockets are empty. He has no sweets and little money.

Despair grips Tawfik's small family: his wife, Amal; 6-year-old son, Adil, and Amira, who no longer asks for candy or expects it.

"I've nothing to give her and it hurts to see her eyes," said Tawfik, who works in a government office for about 300 dinars a month. That is \$100 at the official exchange rate, but less than \$10 in reality.

"Our life is drab," he said. "We don't laugh or picnic or fun any more. We're too tired

just surviving. We only live for the day and try not to think ahead."

Iraq, which has the greatest appetite for sweets of the Arab countries, literally has become a nation without candy and desserts because of limited sugar imports.

Candy stores and ice cream parlors have been closed by the government, along with soft-drink plants and many other factories that use sugar.

There is a black market in baklava pastries. A box of candy is one of the most appreciated gifts a foreigner can bring.

The daily hardship and sacrifice of individuals is surrounded by a vast programme to repair bridges, repair other damage wrought by allied bombing and create new industrial and irrigation projects.

President Saddam Hussein's government is believed to have spent some of its gold reserves on the work, but officials say much of the reconstruction has used materials stockpiled before the war.

Little do Iraqis and the elite, a tiny fraction of Iraq's 18 million people, still live in relative comfort, but they, too, feel besieged.

Mustafa, a skinny 10-year-old

to maintain their living standards or raise cash so they can leave the country — many are selling heirlooms, silver tea sets, treasured wedding presents, jewelry, fur coats, carpets and antique furniture.

One family sold everything and moved to Jordan, but left their furniture in place until they were gone so no one would suspect. They told neighbours they were just taking a vacation.

The Tigris, reddish-pink with churned mud, moves sluggishly through the city. On a jetty beneath the abandoned British embassy, men fish for masgouf, a delicacy served in riverside restaurants. Like candy, masgouf is beyond the reach of most Iraqis.

Women who used to buy bread or take flour to a bakery now bake at home. Children drop out of school to work.

Tire repair is a new trade. Because tires cannot be imported, people mend them with rubber patches and shoe soles, sometimes sewn on.

Little medicine is available because Iraq's assets abroad have been frozen. Malnutrition and disease are serious problems among the poor.

Mustafa, a skinny 10-year-old

diabetic, desperately needs insulin, but cannot get enough because the government has limited supplies and his family is poor.

He is one of eight children and has dropped out of school to do odd jobs, like selling cigarettes or date syrup a substitute for manufactured candy — scrubbing old carpets or cleaning shops.

Sometimes he begs for money on the street, or for stale bread and leftovers from food stalls.

His father, a widower, drives a taxi and the other children work or beg.

What little the family earns helps to buy insulin, but Mustafa has had to reduce his dosage so the medicine will last longer.

Crime is rampant in Baghdad, especially theft and car hijacking.

For the first time, the press is reporting lurid crimes — murder, rape and mutilation — usually linked to robbery, sometimes with whole families as victims.

One of the most significant changes is the erosion of personal relationships between husbands and wives, among brothers, among friends.

Divorce is increasing and the number of marriages has declined significantly, both for economic reasons. Some impoverished men

just walk out on their wives. Family violence is increasing, along with prostitution and alcohol abuse.

"Because life is dull and hard, it's easier for men and women to separate," said Hussein, who runs a small clothing store. "We don't have good times together any more. We're not so close and we fight about things we used to laugh about."

He said his wife, Nadia, once known for her lively spirit, pretty clothes and well-coiffed hair, "has let herself go. She doesn't take care of herself anymore."

Nadia, in her late 20s, now mends and alters her children's clothes and buys none for herself. She bakes her own bread and stands in food lines for hours, cries easily and snaps at her children.

She no longer sees friends, never gets her hair done and sometimes bites her fingernails.

Because Nadia and Hussein no longer can afford birth-control pills, she worries that she may be pregnant with a child they cannot afford.

"My wife's tired. I'm tired. We must worry about getting through the next days and hope the sanctions will end," Hussein said.

Egypt hints at easing tension with Iraq

By Samia Nakhoul
Reuter

CAIRO — There is still no question of Egypt normalizing relations with Iraq but diplomats see the first signs that the hostility which dates from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 is beginning to ease.

Officials say a decision to send a senior diplomat to run Egypt's caretaker mission in Baghdad is simply aimed at improving services to the large Egyptian community there, not raising the level of contacts with the government of Saddam Hussein.

Egyptian diplomats agree that President Hosni Mubarak, who played a big part in the U.S.-led coalition that drove Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in 1991, will not restore normal relations while President Saddam is in power.

But they report that Egypt is increasingly concerned Iraq's weakness is allowing the radical Islamic government in Iran to reassert its influence in the Gulf and elsewhere in the Middle East.

"All we did is decide to send a senior diplomat to look after the mission there ... any restoration of relations between Egypt and Iraq will not include Saddam Hussein," an Egyptian official said.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa last week denied a report that Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz would visit Cairo.

But Egypt's main newspapers, which follow government guidelines, have refrained recently from attacking Iraq.

They strongly condemned the U.S.-led alliance when its warplanes struck at targets in Iraq in January.

"Definitely there will not be resumption of diplomatic relations on high levels, but definitely there is a warming up in relations because of Iran ... tension between Iraq and Egypt is melting away slowly," one Arab diplomat told Reuters.

Egypt has a strategic outlook and decision. It has an interest in a strategic balance of power in the Gulf. Egypt sees Iraq as the only stumbling block against Iran in the Gulf.

"If Iraq is fragmented, the effects would be damaging to Egypt and to all the neighboring states ... if Iraq is weakened further, Iraq will get stronger," the diplomat said.

The Egyptian decision to send a senior diplomat to Baghdad follows an attempt by the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), Yasser Arafat, to mediate. He brought a message from President Saddam to Mr. Mubarak this month offering reconciliation and dialogue.

Mr. Mubarak remains deeply suspicious of President Saddam, whom he repeatedly accused of stabbing him in the back when Egypt was trying to mediate between Iraq and Kuwait before the invasion.

"The experiences of the past taught us not to take such matters lightly ... we should have a deep and sound evaluation," Mr. Mubarak said after hearing Mr. Arafat's message. "Such thoughtful thinking will spare Egypt from taking any hasty act that could harm its interests."

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Syria rejects EC aid, human rights link

BRUSSELS (R) — Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa Thursday rejected any link between his country's human rights record and financial aid from the European Community (EC). European Commission sources said. They said European External Political Affairs Commissioner Hans van den Broek told Mr. Sharaa he hoped the European Parliament next month would unblock financial aid to Syria worth 158 million ECUs (\$186 million). The elected assembly has so far vetoed the money being sent because of alleged human rights abuses. Mr. Van den Broek told Mr. Sharaa there had been positive developments in Syria's human rights record but further improvements were needed. The sources quoted Mr. Van den Broek as saying Syria still held political prisoners and some were detained without being charged and were denied contacts with their families. The sources said Mr. Sharaa rejected any link between EC aid and Syria's internal affairs. He also said the community should apply equal standards when examining the human rights situation in different countries. Mr. Van den Broek, appearing earlier before the parliament's foreign affairs and security committee, said Syria had an important role in Middle East peace diplomacy but withholding the aid could lead to its further isolation.

French police search Iranian TV office

PARIS (R) — French police have searched the Paris offices of the Iranian radio and television network (IRIB) in connection with the 1991 killing of former Iranian Prime Minister Sharoun Bakhtiar, IRIB officials said Thursday. French officials could not immediately confirm the operation which IRIB said took place late Wednesday. A statement from the network said: "French police suspensions about someone once linked to IRIB, long before the Bakhtiar affair, should not be held against this office today." It was referring to Massoud Hendi, who was IRIB's Paris correspondent in 1984 and is said by French police to be a great nephew of Iran's late revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Hendi is one of four Iranians held in French prisons pending trial in connection with Bakhtiar's murder. Bakhtiar was killed in his villa near Paris in August 1991.

Libya to move embassies to Qadhafi's birthplace

TUNIS (R) — Libya has told foreign embassies it plans to move them from Tripoli to leader Muammar Qadhafi's birthplace on the Gulf of Sirte, diplomats in the Libyan capital said Friday. "The Foreign Relations Bureau (foreign ministry) sent us a note asking us to let them know our needs regarding offices and housing in view of a transfer to Ras Lanuf," a European diplomat told Reuters. The diplomats said the government had not yet set a date for the move to Ras Lanuf, Colonel Qadhafi's birthplace 600 kilometers east of Tripoli. Libyans believe Col. Qadhafi aims to make his home region in the Gulf of Sirte into the capital and economic centre of the country. The government's weekly meetings take place in the town of Sirte, 200 kilometers west of Ras Lanuf. Ras Lanuf is one of Libya's main oil terminals and a centre for the petrochemical industry.

First woman in Cyprus cabinet for 23 years

NICOSIA (R) — Cyprus named its first woman cabinet minister for 23 years Thursday. Clairy Angelidou, a headmistress-turned-member of parliament, was appointed education minister in the 11-member Greek-Cypriot cabinet of President-elect Glafcos Clerides. The new foreign minister will be businessman Alecos Michalides, a former president of the Cypriot parliament and vice-president of Mr. Clerides' centre-right party Democratic Rally, the largest on the island. Mr. Clerides and his new government will be sworn in Sunday.

Delors in Rabat to discuss new EC deal

RABAT (R) — European Commission President Jacques Delors is visiting Rabat for talks with King Hassan and government leaders on a new partnership agreement between Morocco and the European Community (EC). Last December the EC adopted a draft mandate to negotiate a partnership agreement with Morocco involving permanent political dialogue, economic cooperation, financial aid and progressive moves towards a free trade zone. The negotiation mandate should be finalised later this year. "I am very glad to take the opportunity to meet His Majesty King Hassan ... and discuss with the (Moroccan) government the main problems we have in common," Mr. Delors told reporters on arrival in Rabat Thursday. A senior EC official said he would discuss the EC's relations with Morocco and meet business leaders during his official three-day visit. The EC granted Morocco a four-year financial aid package worth a total of 498 million ECUs (\$590 million) in December. The EC is by far Morocco's largest trading partner, accounting for \$3.65 billion in imports and \$2.55 billion in exports in 1992. Morocco also signed a four-year fisheries accord with the EC last year under which it stands to get 468 million ECUs (\$556 million) in compensation for allowing EC fishing vessels to continue fishing in Moroccan waters.

2 pro-Kurdish men found dead in Turkey

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey (R) — A body believed to be that of a Kurdish politician missing for a month has been found in southeastern Turkey, local journalists said Friday. They said a mutilated corpse found at a riverside in Tunceli province was identified by his family from his clothes as that of Cemal Akar, a Kurdish party official in Elazig province. Mr. Akar, local leader of the minor Ozdepl (Freedom and Democracy Party) in Erzincan province, had been missing since Jan. 25. Journalists in Batman said 48-year-old pharmacist Ahmet Arkin also was found dead near a village Friday after disappearing on his way home Thursday evening. He was a member of the People's Labour Party, a Kurdish group in parliament. The latest deaths bring the number of the so-called mystery killings in the tense southeast to 43 this year. The region has been racked by a violent separatist Kurdish insurgency waged since 1984 by the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) and an equally relentless fight by security forces. About 450 such killings in 1992 have thrown a blanket of fear and suspicion on the region, with pressure mounting on the government to take more effective measures.

Proposed value of downtown Beirut property causes stir

BEIRUT (AP) — An assessment of property value in war-damaged downtown Beirut caused an uproar Friday among owners and tenants, who called a meeting to protest against the move.

The Committee of Right and Property Holders in Downtown Beirut, which represents tenants and owners, urged the 150,000 people affected to contact its offices to organise against a controversial plan to reconstruct the capital's old sector.

An initial assessment, released by a government sponsored committee Thursday, set the average price for one square metre in downtown Beirut at \$1,400.

The leftist newspaper Al Safir, in its main story, said the proposed estimate was in fact "one third of the real value of most property and rights" in downtown Beirut, which took the brunt of the 1975-1990 civil war.

Real estate in downtown Cairo costs between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a square metre and in downtown Damascus \$4,500 and up for commercial property, although obviously those cities have not been devastated by civil war.

The Beirut estimate was a crude

initial step in setting up the real estate company, which will carry out the reconstruction of 662,700 square metres downtown.

Owners of property and rights would be given shares in the developed property equal to the value of their assessed rights.

However, a 1991 law providing for the private sector to shoulder responsibility for rebuilding the commercial district did not draw a clear line between property owners and right holders. That left the door open for conflicts among tenants and between tenants and owners.

The secretary-general of the founding authority for the real estate company, Nasser Al Sharraa, said the firm was not expected to start apportioning shares before the summer of 1993, after the release of the final assessment of property prices in downtown Beirut.

The final assessment would follow appeals by owners of rights and property.

Al Safir noted that most right owners would not be able to appeal the initial assessment because "it only covered the proposed price for real estate and did not refer to rights of tenants."

Foreigners killed Saudi aides, Thai minister says

BANGKOK (R) — Thailand's interior minister blamed foreigners Friday for the murder of four Saudi Arabian diplomats in 1989 and 1990, but said Thai policeman was responsible for the related disappearance of a Saudi businessman.

The (Interior Ministry) committee has scrutinised the evidence and believes that the causes and motivation of the cases stem from religious conflict in which the persons who took the action are foreigners," General Chavalit Yongchayudh said in a prepared statement at a news conference.

He did not say what country the foreigners came from. But an interior ministry source who asked not to be named told Reuters Iranians carried out the killings in 1989 and 1990.

Investigations showed the gunmen arrived in Bangkok three days before the 1990 assassinations and that the guns used were of a type common in the Middle East, the source said.

Saudi Arabia responded to the deaths by recalling its ambassador and refusing to issue new visas to Thai workers. Some

140,000 Thais were working in the kingdom before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, with 50,000 there in May 1991.

Days after the 1990 killings prominent Saudi Arabian businessman Mohammad Al Ruwaili, who was closely related to the Saudi royal family, disappeared and is presumed dead. It is alleged he was taken from his home by police for questioning.

"It is found that the crime was committed by the police officer

who was involved with the investigation of the case of the assassination of the Saudi embassy officials," police Lieutenant-Colonel Somkid Bonthanom told Reuters.

"Why can't we close ranks and work together now? You find women at all levels in the ministries and this (the vote) is the only area from which we are isolated," she added.

The debate over women's suffrage often bogged down in law.

Proponents cite article 29 of the constitution which states that all men and women are equal in the eyes of the constitution.

Opponents cite article two of the 1962 election law which says only men over the age 21 can vote.

"The promise that women will be granted their political rights must be fulfilled, because Kuwaiti women performed such heroic roles during the invasion and offered martyrs from among their ranks," said Awaif Al Majid.

Ms. Majid, a Red Crescent society worker, helped to channel food and medicine to resistance fighters during the occupation.

The level of education between Kuwaiti men and women is the same, so why are most men afraid to compete with us?" asked lawyer Badriyah Al Awadi.

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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan attends Friday prayer at Al Fadil ibn Abbas Mosque in Amman. Following the prayer, Prince Hassan toured Russell's markets where he met with citizens, inspected their conditions and listened to their requests and comments. The Prince

stressed the need for the local councils and administrations to coordinate with the Ministry of Awqaf to establish a link between sermons and religious lessons on the one hand and people's daily needs, conditions and social behaviours on the other.

Potential for cooperation with Islamic republics 'tremendous', says Jordanian team on return from their 5-state tour

By Elias Nasrallah

Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian delegation, headed by Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, at toured the five Islamic republics of the former Soviet Union this month, is optimistic about future cooperation between these republics and Jordan in economic, technical, industrial and other fields.

Khalid Abu Hassan, member of the delegation who returned to Amman Feb. 20, told the Jordan Times Friday that the outcome of the visit was excellent and the ideas put to the leaders and the business communities in the five countries were well received.

On the tour the delegation had the opportunity to talk to ministers, leaders of industrial and economic sectors and prominent individuals about various fields of operation. Mr. Abu Hassan said,

He added that the delegation

explored fields of cooperation such as launching joint ventures.

Mr. Abu Hassan, who is the president of the Amman Chamber of Industry, said "we have visited officials and businessmen on the five countries to visit the industry and familiarise themselves with the achievements realized in industry, agriculture and her sectors; and the leaders of these countries have promised to my visits to Jordan possibly

within the coming few months."

The idea of creating joint business councils in each of the Islamic countries to supervise economic activities with Jordan was eagerly welcomed because such councils, said Mr. Abu Hassan, would be in charge of organising trade and industrial exhibitions to promote the sale of national products.

The five Islamic countries we visited are rich in minerals and agriculture, but their industry is now outdated and most of their economies are still linked with the Russian economy, although they are trying to disengage themselves from such linkage," Mr. Abu Hassan said. He added that these, perhaps Uzbekistan has already succeeded in embarking on a market economy, while the others are striving hard to achieve that point.

The Jordanian delegation was careful to note that in view of its central geographical location in the Middle East, and in light of its developed business and service sectors, like finance, banking and insurance, the Kingdom is in a position to help and cooperate closely with the Islamic states, Mr. Abu Hassan said.

"Although the emphasis was on cooperation with the Islamic countries, we also had talks with leaders in Russia on such matters as cooperating in banking and business in general; but the political situation is not yet clear as the country is struggling to adopt a market economy," Mr. Abu Hassan explained.

The delegation visited Uzb-

kistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and documents for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Jordan were signed in each republic.

According to Mr. Abu Hassan,

the leaders of these five countries appreciate the role and the policies of His Majesty King Hussein and regard with deep respect the moderate policies of the Kingdom and its role in religious affairs.

King Hussein met the Jordanian delegation at the Royal Court Thursday in the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief of the Royal Court Khaled Al Karaki and Foreign Minister Kamel Abu Jaber to discuss the outcome of the tour.

The King praised the delegation's effort, describing it as opening a new path for cooperation with the Islamic republics.

Urging the delegation and the government to pursue bridges of understanding and confidence with the Islamic republics, King Hussein said scopes of cooperation are numerous and Jordan ought to help the new republics establish their Islamic cultural identity.

He called on the government to form follow-up teams to achieve that goal.

The delegation members all described their visits as extremely successful, noting that potential for cooperation in many fields is tremendous.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Crown Prince condoles Al Khreisha family

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Friday delegated his advisor Mohammad Njadat to convey his condolences to Al Khreisha family over the death of Zeid Mohammad Al Khreisha.

New coins to be issued

AMMAN (Petra) — New coins will be put into circulation by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) as of Monday, March 1, 1992. The CBJ announced that the coins will be of the 10,5. and 2.5 piasters denominations, issued in accordance with the bank's 1992 system No. 28. The new coins will be used in the local market along with the old ones, the CBJ said. On one side of the coins will be a profile photo of His Majesty King Hussein, with the phrase "Al Hussein Ben Talal, the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" written in Arabic. On the other side there will be the denomination written in Arabic and English, the year of issuance and the phrase "The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" in English.

JNRCS begins assistance distribution

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) has begun distributing in-kind assistance to needy families in various parts of the Kingdom. The assistance includes sugar, rice, flour, fat and clothing. The JNRCS recently distributed gifts, clothing and toys to children attending At Amal School for the Deaf and Mute in Quwaisnah.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed date and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition of paintings by four Arab artists from the United States — Ghada Jamal, Helen Khalil, Suha Noursi and Afaf Zarayk — at the Abdol Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery in Jabal Amman, between the First and Second Circles (10 a.m.- 4 p.m.)

Exhibition of oil paintings by Iraqi artist Mohammad Fakher at Salada Art Gallery.

Exhibition of paintings by Iraqi artists Mohammad Fredi and Amer Mejjeh at Alia Art Gallery.

3 suspects held in Jabal Amman attack

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Police have announced the arrest of three suspects in at least three attacks on shops in Amman this month.

It was not known whether the three were also suspected of involvement in a series of attacks in the capital and suburbs since mid-September, but it was believed that the arrests could prove to be a major breakthrough in the investigations.

Brigadier-General Abdulla Hababbeh, chief of police in Amman, said Thursday the arrests came after an attempted robbery of a supermarket in the First Circle area of Jabal Amman Monday evening.

The owner of the store, Mohammad Mashaal, was stabbed in the neck by one assailant when he was grappling with another, but the injury was not serious.

Brig. Hababbeh, in an interview with Jordan Television, did not reveal the identity of the

suspects, but said they had confessed to three attacks: A Feb. 15 robbery at a Jabal Amman pharmacy in which they netted JD 110, a Feb. 17 robbery at an Umm Uthaina bookstore in which they got JD 12 and Monday's foiled attempt at Mashaal supermarket.

No violence except threats with a weapon was involved in the first two incidents, sources said.

The suspects described only as "Arab nationals," fled the scene after Monday's aborted supermarket robbery, and police mounted an unprecedented manhunt in the area which lasted more than 36 hours.

Sources said two of the three were detained after a raid in a house in an area popularly known as "Egyptians' street" in Jabal Amman, and the third was arrested in light of information provided by the two.

According to the police statement, the suspects have criminal records.

There was no immediate indication whether the three were

suspects in any other crimes, particularly the series of ill-famous attacks since mid-September.

But the pointed absence of any reference to these incidents in the police statement suggested that the authorities were opting to continue secret investigations.

"Police are hoping that interrogation of the three would yield information on the earlier attacks," said one source.

At least nine attacks with common features of physical assault have occurred since Sept. 13. At least two victims died and others suffered serious injuries.

The last attack was two weeks ago, at a bookstore in the Tabora area of northeast Amman.

Early reports said police investigations had found that a blunt instrument — most probably a medium-sized hammer — was used in most attacks, and hence the assailant(s) was nicknamed by the media as "Abu Shakoush (hammerman)."

In an interview with Jordan Television last week, Major-General Fadel Ali Feid revealed

Riyad Hroub, chief editor of Shihan weekly, maintained that it was the media's duty to present the facts as they are to the public and said police should release related information to the media.

Gen. Feid said police were dutybound to maintain silence on criminal investigations until definite facts were established and suspects were arrested, since immature disclosures could hamper their work and negatively affect the success of their efforts.

In his public comments, Gen. Feid has repeatedly reminded the Jordanian public that the Kingdom's security forces have a record of solving some of most difficult cases.

"It is only a matter of time before the so-called 'Ahu Shakoush' or 'Abu Mismar' (hailman) cases would be solved," he commented, taking a jab at the media for their handling of the issue.

In the meantime, the police chief advised the public not to panic, but be cautious.

AARDO sets up regional office in Amman

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzaq Tubasibat and Secretary General of the Afro-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO), Ahmad Khalil Thursday signed an agreement organising the work of the AARDO's Amman-based regional office for the Middle East.

The agreement defines the duties and responsibilities of the office and the commitments of the ministry.

Under the agreement, Jordan can benefit from the AARDO's projects in the area of integrated rural development.

The regional office in Amman will make the necessary contacts with AARDO's headquarters to ensure the participation of Jordanians in training courses and seminars held by the organisation and its scholarship programme.

The organisation's Amman office will be headed by Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Secretary General Assem Ghosheh.

One of the sources said that more than half of the depositors were inclined to accept the partial payoff, but the rest were resisting, arguing that depositors in the bank, which was sequestered by European monetary authorities in July 1991, were capable of paying in full.

According to the sources, the total amount involved is around \$235 million, the bulk of them in accounts with BCCI branches in London.

One of the sources said that

more than half of the depositors were inclined to accept the partial payoff, but the rest were resisting, arguing that depositors in some of the European as well as Middle Eastern countries were paid in full by the owners — the

sources added.

Other sources said those rejecting the offer represented only 10 per cent of the depositors.

"...There will not be any solution... except through the return in full of our deposits and rights registered with the bank," said an advertisement published in the local press by a committee of the depositors last week after a meeting with the representatives of the owners.

"We... declare that all proposed plans and methods used to conceal the truth will not make us give up our claims for our full rights," it added. "...the reasons

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ching joint ventures.

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Jordanian depositors reject 35% offer from BCCI owners in Abu Dhabi

Committee demands full payment of said \$235m involved

family of Sheikh Zayed Sultan Al Nahayan, president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and absolute ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

"They (Jordanian depositors)

are arguing that their counter-

parts in France, Spain and other European countries, Yemen and Oman in the Middle East and several countries in the Far East have been paid in full," said one of the sources.

"Their approach is also based on the argument that the ruling family of Abu Dhabi is wealthy enough to return all their de-

posits," the source added.

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Don't corner the Palestinians

THE DECISION made by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and his Russian counterpart Andre Kozyrev to go ahead and extend invitations to the Arab and Israeli parties to attend the next round of peace talks in Washington in April suggests that Mr. Christopher's visit to the Middle East was, relatively speaking, successful.

The fact that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin did not endorse Mr. Christopher's proposals over the expulsion of 400 Palestinians to South Lebanon does not seem to taper American optimism over the participation of all the parties in the 10th round of the peace negotiations. This could be explained by the hypothesis that Mr. Rabin's reluctance to accept the new U.S. ideas on the Palestinian exiles may have been motivated by Israeli domestic considerations. Israel's Labour government obviously does not want to appear as having buckled under U.S. pressure over an issue that has caused it a lot of embarrassment.

The fact that Mr. Rabin and his government are telling their American allies that they are ready to concentrate on negotiating a deal with Syria suggests that the Israelis want to put more pressure on the Palestinians to accept whatever being offered by the Labour government and sanctioned by the U.S.

Should this Israeli tactic of a Camp-David-like accord with Syria materialise, it will push Palestinian radicalism to its limits and will be a prescription for a new era of conflict and chaos in the region. While Mr. Rabin's predecessor, Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir, intended to go on negotiating with the Palestinians for a decade while changing reality on the ground, Mr. Rabin seems to be intent or pursuing the same ends but with different means.

Nevertheless, should American efforts to bring all the parties back to the negotiating table bear fruit, the thrust of the U.S. "full involvement" should focus on advancing the process on all tracks, especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track where the core of the Arab-Israeli dispute lies. It has become a foregone conclusion that unless the Palestinian issue is resolved once and for ever, and for the satisfaction of the Palestinians' national aspirations, peace in the Middle East will not be attained. This is why Mr. Rabin and his government should work for an early return of the exiles and an easing of the harsh conditions that Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza are subjected to. Mr. Rabin himself needs to take the initiative and show goodwill and he will find the Palestinians ready to sit and talk peace.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily Friday criticised the United States continued drive to starve the Iraqi people and to condone Israel's atrocities in the occupied Arab lands. It said that dropping food to the people of Bosnia Herzegovina can by no means improve U.S. image because its policies are based on aggression and its history abounds with evidence about American forces making aggression acts against people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. While allowing the Israelis to kill Palestinians fighting for their freedom and maintaining sanctions on Iraqi women and children, the United States claims to be striving to attain peace in the Middle East and continues to invite the Arabs to the negotiating table, said the daily. With a deteriorating economy at home, the United States cannot be in a position to police the world justly and fairly, and with its aggressive attitude towards other nations, it is only bound to win the hatred of other nations, the paper said. The policies adopted by the successive U.S. administration do not reflect wisdom at all, neither do they show that those in power realise that their actions cannot help establish peace and stability in the world, the paper said. To succeed, the United States should not only care about its trade agreements with Japan and Europe, or direct its attention towards looting the oil wealth of the Arab countries, but rather, said the paper, it should recognise the rights of other nations to freedom and real peace and security. The paper said that the current siege on Iraq could cause suffering to the Iraqis but can by no means win the United States any glory.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily commented on the ongoing charity campaign spearheaded by Her Royal Highness Princess Bassma. The charity campaign is aimed at raising funds to finance projects for the needy and to collect donations for the poor families of Jordan and there many, said Nazih. The writer said that those who are wealthy and able to extend a helping hand more than others are expected to give more, in line with the teachings of religion. This is a noble mission being implemented by the Queen Alia Fund and one that requires support and active backing by all Jordanians, especially during the month of Ramadan, said the writer. Indeed, it is up to the Jordanian people to see this campaign succeed because the Queen Alia Fund is only a coordinator and organiser of the campaign, arranging for the donations to reach the targeted needy people, continued the writer. He said that this campaign is a trust and a responsibility that should be shouldered by all those who are in a position to extend a helping hand to the needy in our community. Aiming to achieve a noble mission, this campaign relies squarely on the noble attitude and generosity of the Jordanian family, said the writer. He said that the campaign serves as a testing ground to determine the Jordanian society's readiness and capability to enhance social solidarity among their members.

The transitional politics of human rights

Following is an excerpt from an address delivered by Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka to the Association of Nigerian Authors at the end of 1992. Since the delivery of the address, Nigerian presidential elections were postponed until June this year.

THE NEWS is not notably encouraging. The news is, to be candid, a little disheartening. At the last gathering of writers on our own soil at which I was present — the International Conference on African Literature in May 1988 — I made a call to all African dictators to set a date, well before the end of this century, to terminate their existence and restore the right of self-determination to our people. I also called upon my fellow writers to utilise all their skills to bring about this desired socio-political condition for the African polity. Those summonses received a formal boost from the then president of the Organisation of African Unity, General Ibrahim Babangida, at the annual conference of that organisation in June 1991 in Abuja. It was a speech which was quite unprecedented in the gatherings of that mutual admiration club of African rulers.

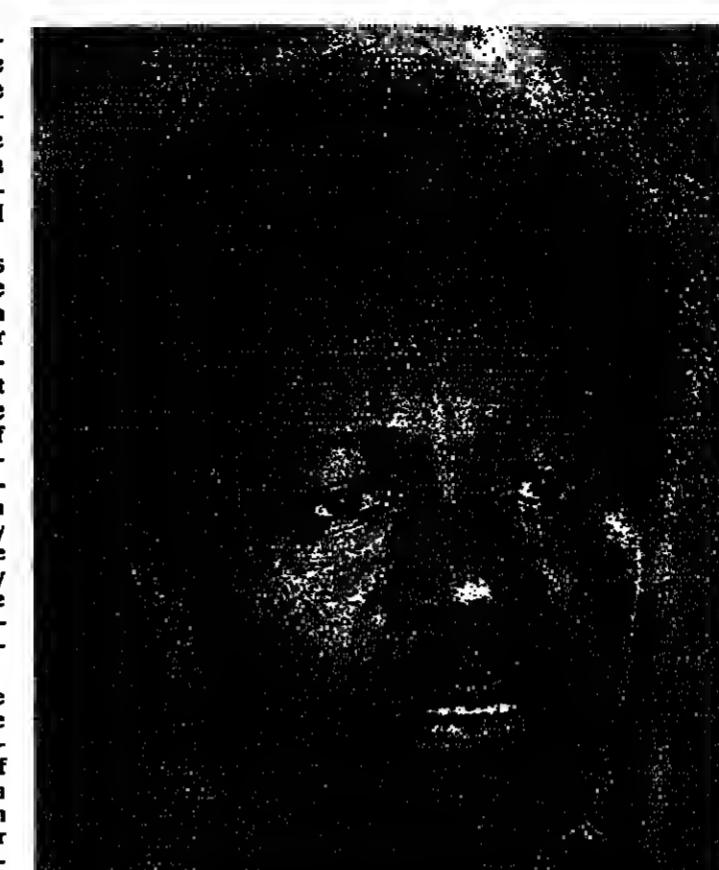
We know that a democratic order is, by itself, no cast-iron guarantee for the application of fundamental human rights in any society. It is even becoming fashionable to say that it is futile to speak of human rights when people have yet to be assured of two square meals a day in a society that does not lack for resources. That latter statement, apart from its unctuousness, suggests to me in a rather macabre way that society would be happier if victims of torture were well-nourished rather than skeletal. Or that it would be perfectly acceptable to lock people up in totally darkened cells for 180 days at a stretch — as was the practice in the old South Africa — as long as such prisoners are guaranteed three square meals a day. Let us quit this pointless game of comparative humanism. The ideal society is not achieved by belittling one right of the individual in order to promote another; all ills of society are not addressed within the same bread; and a division of labour is the strategy of social responsibility. And it is from within this holistic awareness that we also insist that, while democracy does not absolutely guarantee the ideal condition of fundamental human rights, it is a rational, time-tested foundation on which we can begin to erect a superstructure of those rights.

Delusions of grandeur, or power, are not, alas, confined to the aged and senile. Mr. Strasser of Sierra Leone is already exhibiting the banal symptoms. And on our home front (Nigeria) we have recently undergone a variety of assaults on our fragile democratic initiatives by individuals with uncommonly high levels self-regard. Where this delusion is most highly concentrated, what we have witnessed is a nearly single-handed subversion of the democratic machinery, the purchase of so-called power-brokers — in reality mere mobsters, enforcers and thugs — recruited through agents the length and breadth of the country; we have witnessed the purchase of returning officers, state legislators, local government party chairmen, traditional rulers and, yes, even elected governors, who then convert the machinery of state to the personal service of one individual, marching to the sweet

nia notes from a muted martial bugle.

Our tools, as writers, are words, and if I appear to have stated the obvious, I shall extend this further by stating that, as users of words primarily, it is only natural that we are more responsive, perhaps even over-responsive, to the nuances or sub-texts of the choices of public expression than the ordinary individual. The foregoing is to situate why I was recently startled by the contrast provided by two public expressions of the same objective, and reminded that there has been a promotion of certain dangerous tendencies in government which we have wrongly designated as trivial. While we may dismiss certain foibles related to the podium of power as mere aberrations that will disappear with the termination of a particular regime, we would be shrinking our responsibility if, on discovering that we are being brainwashed into accepting such abnormalities as the norm, we do not immediately call attention to them. This is how traditions are established, even of the unsavoury kind. We dare not wait until our new democratic replacements adopt what, in effect, are abuses of the government process. We have to let them know, now, that such conduct will not be tolerated. The time to place them on notice is now.

This nation is weary of arbitrary interventions in people's daily existence; it is ready for a civic order, even with all its own pitfalls, human failings and sweat-



Wole Soyinka: While Democracy does not absolutely guarantee the ideal conditions of fundamental human rights, it is a rational, time-tested foundation on which we can begin to erect a supersstructure of those rights.

natural prospects.

We must spend a little more time on the military caste — and its human accretions — from whose control we insist our destiny must be wrenches. Nigerians forget easily. Or perhaps we should put it this way — the reaction of the average Nigerian to any challenging or unsettling event is to connect such an event to similar occurrences in the past, even as a homologue. Such recollection is bound to qualify, in a reasoned way, what would otherwise be a blind instinctual response to the immediate event. We know that we do recall events which provoked a similar burr, a similar resentment, a similar state of rage, but, usually, only when the perpetrators of the new assault are the same as before, since this further propels us into the vengeful, emotive mode of response.

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We must spend a little more time on the military caste — and its human accretions — from whose control we insist our destiny must be wrenches. Nigerians forget easily. Or perhaps we should put it this way — the reaction of the average Nigerian to any challenging or unsettling event is to connect such an event to similar occurrences in the past, even as a homologue. Such recollection is bound to qualify, in a reasoned way, what would otherwise be a blind instinctual response to the immediate event. We know that we do recall events which provoked a similar burr, a similar resentment, a similar state of rage, but, usually, only when the perpetrators of the new assault are the same as before, since this further propels us into the vengeful, emotive mode of response.

Our tools, as writers, are words, and if I appear to have stated the obvious, I shall extend this further by stating that, as users of words primarily, it is only natural that we are more responsive, perhaps even over-responsive, to the nuances or sub-texts of the choices of public expression than the ordinary individual.

The foregoing is to situate why I was recently startled by the contrast provided by two public expressions of the same objective, and reminded that there has been a promotion of certain dangerous tendencies in government which we have wrongly designated as trivial. While we may dismiss certain foibles related to the podium of power as mere aberrations that will disappear with the termination of a particular regime, we would be shrinking our responsibility if, on discovering that we are being brainwashed into accepting such abnormalities as the norm, we do not immediately call attention to them. This is how traditions are established, even of the unsavoury kind. We dare not wait until our new democratic replacements adopt what, in effect, are abuses of the government process. We have to let them know, now, that such conduct will not be tolerated. The time to place them on notice is now.

This nation is weary of arbitrary interventions in people's daily existence; it is ready for a civic order, even with all its own pitfalls, human failings and sweat-

atian prospects.

Syria to convene Arab meeting

(Continued from page 1)

415 Palestinians from the occupied territories. Mr. Christopher is now gambling that Arabs, including the Palestinians, would be ready to return to the talks before all the evictees were returned to their homes.

Mr. Christopher said he had not asked and did not receive an assurance from Mr. Sharawi that Syria would attend the April talks. The assurance he did receive was apparently a more general commitment to work for the resumption of the peace process.

Mr. Christopher said he had been encouraged by the reaction to the decision to issue invitations.

"I continue to feel optimistic. I'm encouraged by developments since yesterday when the announcement was made," he said.

Mr. Christopher said Sharawi had repeated that he attached the highest value to reconvening the peace talks and had said he was pleased the invitations had been issued for April.

Mr. Sharawi said in a newspaper interview published Friday the United States must back implementation of a U.N. resolution urging the return of the evictees.

But he said Syria, a key player in the peace process, had not linked the issue to Syrian participation in the talks.

In his interview with the French newspaper Le Figaro, Mr. Sharawi said suspicions that Syria wanted to conclude the negotiations with Israel without waiting for them had "no foundation."

"We want a global settlement," Mr. Sharawi said. "If we could have done it years ago, if more attention is paid to the Syrian-Israeli negotiations than to the others, that is because there can be no peace without Syria."

"All I can say at the present time is we feel confident enough about the situation to have indicated that we think the next round of these negotiations should commence in April," Mr. Christopher told a joint news conference after meeting Mr. Kozyrev.

"We felt there were enough positive signs to have made the statement."

A U.S. official said Mr. Christopher decided to propose the idea to Mr. Kozyrev after late night contacts Wednesday with parties to the negotiations.

Mr. Christopher said several of the leaders he met in the Middle East stressed the importance of resuming talks quickly.

"This is a historic moment. I was surprised by the number of countries, the number of leaders, who told me in the Middle East that they think it's a one-off opportunity for peace," he said. "And they want to grasp the moment."

The U.S.-Russian move put intense pressure on Palestinian negotiators to attend the talks even if their demand for the immediate return of the expelled Palestinians was not met.

Adding to the pressure on the Palestinians, President Bill Clinton sent a letter to East Jerusalem leader Faisal Husseini which spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi described as "positive and encouraging."

Mr. Kozyrev said Russia would hold talks with Palestinian leaders in Moscow within the next few days to try to persuade them to attend the talks and to fix a specific date.

In occupied Jerusalem, the head of the Palestinian negotiating team, Haider Abdul Shafi, said the invitation was premature.

Group urges Hamas

(Continued from page 1)

operative as a party during the month of Ramadan. West Bank organisers say.

The Tunis-based DFLP wing agreed to represent FIDA in the PLO Executive Committee, the Palestine Central Council (PCC) and the PNC. While Mr. Abed Rabbo is not the head of the party he will represent the party's interests outside the occupied territories along with other DFLP officials belonging to his branch of the party.

"We, as a group have always chosen the 'realistic' way, the way of cohabitation and mutual recognition," said Friday's statement.

"We chose to de-centralise while others were centralising even more than previously," the statement said.

"Our merger with FIDA shows that we are taking the decision-making powers and the lead-

urned down. But the delegation negotiating on behalf of the Palestinians in the Middle East peace talks is controlled by the LO.

"Under the circumstances, reumption of the dialogue with the LO will reflect positively on the

'Russia's inheritance of the Soviet Union is illegal'

By Farouq Tobulat

On Oct. 25, 1917, the Bolsheviks carried out a coup; on Oct. 26, 1917, the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, in a unilateral decision, without consulting the peoples inhabiting the Russian empire, formed the Russian government, the Council of Peoples' Commissars.

He indicated Israel had not accepted two key Palestinian demands, for it to repatriate the nearly 400 expellees and to pledge not to expel more Palestinians.

Spokeswoman Ashrawi said they had received two "encouraging" letters each from President Clinton and from Mr. Christopher Thursday, but that their messages fell short of resolving the crisis.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said the expulsion of the 400 Palestinians was an exception to government policy, but the government has not made any statement renouncing the practice of expulsion.

In a speech Thursday, Mr. Rabin defended the practice, even as he gave an upbeat assessment of the peace process.

"We are ready to make compromises for peace. But we are not ready for compromises in the war against terror," he said.

Speaking of prospects for peace, Mr. Rabin said, "It is very likely that next year will be one of the most fateful and important in the history of the state of Israel" and that the Jewish state would face difficult decisions.

The treaty on forming the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was signed by the Russian Federation on behalf of all the peoples inhabiting the Russian empire.

In June 1990, the RSFSR adopted the declaration of sovereignty, which proclaimed the superiority of Russia's legislation over the legislation of the USSR. It was the first step on the way of destroying the united states — the USSR.

On Dec. 8, 1991, the leaders of the Russian federation, the Ukraine, and Belarus concluded the agreement on forming the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) which announced the abolition of the USSR. Consequently, the USSR stopped existing as a subject of international law and a geopolitical reality, as the treaty points out.

This decision was illegal because, according to the points of the agreement on forming the USSR in 1922, the subjects of the union could only denounce the treaty (i.e. leave the Union), but not abolish it.

On Dec. 21, 1991, the Alma-Ata Summit of the former Soviet

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Union heads of republics took place. Eight more republics joined the agreement.

It was decided in Alma-Ata that other republics of the USSR should support Russia as the union's successor. Specifically, they should acknowledge Russia's right to substitute the Soviet Union at the U.N. Security Council. Since some union republics which signed the agreement or joined it were illegal, such as the republics of Moldavia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and others which were formed according to the USSR's laws and did not exist as independent states before, the Alma-Ata meeting violates all legal norms and Russia has no legal grounds for membership in the U.N. and its bodies, especially the Security Council, as the USSR successor state.

Russia and other CIS founders rudely deprived their citizens of USSR citizenship which legally meant an automatic loss of their citizenship because, according to Article 16 of the law on citizenship in the USSR of Dec. 1, 1978, the loss of the USSR citizenship is followed by the loss of a union republic's citizenship.

It follows that any changes of the state system or relations between the parties who had signed the agreement on founding the CIS with other states and international organisations are illegal as are any acts adopted by these states before adopting a national legislation on citizenship.

After changing the legal status of the RSFSR, no referendum or new elections to the supreme bodies of legislation were held, let alone adopting the new constitution.

So the above analysis of the existing documents brings us to the following:

1. Founding the RSFSR as a federative state was illegal because there was neither peoples' voluntary nor legal documents signed.

2. Russia's inheriting the former USSR's rights and its presence in the U.N. Security Council is illegal.

3. The cancellation of the USSR and foundation of the CIS is illegal.

The writer is head of the Information Bureau and official spokesman of the Chechen Republic in Jordan and in the Middle East.

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Thinker urges Islamic 'cultural revolution'

By Katia Sabet

CAIRO — A new cultural revolution is needed in the Arab countries where Islamic fundamentalism is a growing problem. That is the verdict of Egyptian-born Dr. Rouchdi Fakkar, humanist, sociologist and one of the Arab World's great contemporary thinkers.

The best way to combat Islamic extremism is not by sending in the troops, says Dr. Fakkar, but by teaching the people — and especially the younger generation — that the true Islamic religion has nothing to do with violence or terror tactics.

"These young terrorists, these children who are being manipulated, they need to be trained and educated," said Dr. Fakkar. "I would wish for a cultural and educational revolution in all the Muslim countries."

In an interview, he talked of his sadness at the way Islam's real nature has been distorted by religious reactionaries. And he launched a proposal for a campaign to restore the human face of the Islamic faith.

Dr. Fakkar describes himself as a "genius in his field." "One must be objective," said Dr. Fakkar. "The Jews have made great contributions to progress in all the fields of culture and science. Having said that, let us not forget that there is a category of Jew who is chauvinist and racist, completely closed to the outside world. These are the real enemies, not just to Arabs, but to other Jews and to Judaism in general. One cannot take them as an example by which to judge an entire people."

According to Dr. Fakkar, dialogue is the only real hope for a narrowing of the gap between the Muslim World and the West. I believe that democracy is slowly making headway almost everywhere in the Arab World, even if it only takes the form of the traditional Islamic consultative councils. The days of the dictators are over.

At the heart of the problem, says the Egyptian sociologist, is an ever-widening gap between the true teachings of the Islamic religion and the distorted version that some sectors have created for their own political ends.

"It is sad today to see a prefabricated Islam that each person has designed to suit his own needs," said Dr. Fakkar. "Some people seem to believe they have the monopoly on the Islamic faith. In fact, Islam is quite simply a ques-

tion of living according to the rules of Islam. A person who steals, tricks, kills and fornicates is living outside the realm of Islam."

The 64-year-old intellectual, one of the most highly regarded minds in the Islamic World, was born in Karnak in southern Egypt. After graduating from the University of Al Azhar, he went on to teach in several major European seats of learning, including the Sorbonne and the University of Geneva. Specialising in pre-Marxist sociology and socialism, Dr. Fakkar's studies also cover social anthropology, cultural relations and psychology.

He has worked for UNESCO and published around 50 books, articles and essays. Founder of the Institute of Sociology in Morocco, it is there that he now lives, with his wife and two children.

Dr. Fakkar's views are wide-ranging, and he rejects narrow interpretations of religion and race. For a time, he worked with Georges Gurvitch, a Russian Jew and renowned sociologist whom Dr. Fakkar describes as a "genius in his field." "One must be objective," said Dr. Fakkar.

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Jordan offers Irish toughest budget for years

JBLIN (R) — Finance Minister Bertie Ahern, presenting one of the toughest budgets in the history of the Irish state, has imposed a one per cent levy on the salaries of most wage-earners.

Hoping for stability in turbulent currency markets after the valuation of the punt within the European Community's exchange rate mechanism last month, he warned that the situation remained difficult.

"As a trading nation, and especially one with a heavy debt burden, we are very exposed to the prevailing winds which are very changeable right now," he said in a packed parliament.

Determined to give a strong message to financial markets, Mr.

Ahern kept a tight rein on state spending.

He set an ambitious exchequer borrowing requirement (EBR) target of 760 million pounds (\$1,140) or 2.9 per cent of gross national product.

This would keep Irish borrowing in line with the criteria set under the EC's 1991 Maastricht treaty on European political and economic union.

He promised that the one per cent levy — seen by private economists as an income tax increase with a different name — would be temporary. About one quarter of the workforce was exempted from it.

Mr. Ahern also raised indirect taxes on adult clothes, shoes,

telecommunication charges and hotel rates.

Cigarettes will also cost almost five per cent more but alcoholic beverages were left alone for fear of prompting cross-border smuggling from British-ruled Northern Ireland.

With unemployment expected to soar to another new high of 309,000 this year, Mr. Ahern did offer some comfort for the jobless with social welfare payments going up 3.5 per cent and child benefit payments rising by 2.7 per cent.

He warned that inflation would climb by 3.75 per cent this year

compared with three per cent in 1992 with half the increase due to budget measures.

Mr. Ahern forecast that Ireland's gross domestic product would rise 2.5 per cent this year against 2.7 per cent last year.

He said Ireland "had suffered a severe jolting from the currency turbulence in the European exchange rate mechanism, pushing up our interest rates."

"The conditions are I hope stabilising in the currency and money markets and German interest rates have finally begun to fall, the situation remains difficult," he added.

Saudi banks report a lucrative 1992

JORDAN TIMES, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1993 7

Riyad Bank's profit jumped by 88 per cent to \$45 million (\$199 million) from an adjusted 1991 profit figure. Because of a share flotation, earnings per share grew by "only" 13 per cent, a figure nonetheless respectable at a time when the global economy was not booming.

The continued decline in interest rates so far this year has translated into more capital gains for some — though this may be counteracted in the rest of the year by lower returns for their investments once the decline stops.

A potential storm cloud on the horizon is if Iraq returns to the oil market, forcing Saudi Arabia to scale back from its current eight million barrels per day of crude production.

Saudi Arabia can borrow further to make up for shortfalls, but if it cuts back on actual government spending the economy and the banks will feel it.

But at the mean time, Saudi Arabia is simply a very wealthy country. One economist estimates the average disposable income per Saudi family to be \$147,000 — all tax-free.

"I'm bullish on 1993," an economist said.

sis this year, but they believe profits will rise in most cases nonetheless.

The challenge will be for these banks to keep up earnings per share — and not just earnings — but most economists feel that with the opportunities for expansion that will be possible.

The

most profitable of the 10 banks reporting results so far — two have not — is Saudi American Bank (SAMBA) 30 per cent owned by Citicorp.

An active economy has meant more loans, more financing of Saudi Arabia's fast-rising imports, more fees — and fewer investments going belly-up as in the mid to late-1980s.

Many banks also profited from the fall in international interest rates, which gave them a capital gain on their bonds and other securities and which also encouraged more borrowing.

It's

profit

jumped 21 per cent in

1992 to 910 million riyals. That's \$243 million — compared with the \$280 million that the entire Citicorp network made in the fourth quarter last year.

"What says it all is SAMBA's results," an analyst said. "If you give good service and a good product, you can make major money."

And several have benefited from huge new share flotations. These have given them new cash to invest immediately, enabled those with troubled loan portfolios finally to make adequate provisions and permitted aggressive new loan expansion.

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Economists were unwilling to predict whether the banks would be able to maintain the same percentage increases in their pro-

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Singapore to raise retirement age

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton drummed up support for his economic plan Thursday, picking up strong endorsements from leaders of business and labour unions.

The president, addressing two dozen business executives and labour officials, promoted his proposals to cut the federal deficit by \$325 billion over four years through spending cuts and tax increases, combined with a fiscal stimulus package.

"I am very encouraged by the business-labour partnership that we see manifested here today," Mr. Clinton said.

The meeting was one of a series

of Mr. Clinton and his cabinet have held to build support and exert pressure on the U.S. Congress to approve the plan, which opposition Republicans say is heavy on tax rates and light on spending cuts.

In the meeting Thursday in the old executive office building adjacent to the White House, Mr. Clinton played the role of salesman, pitching his plan to the business executives and union leaders.

"We support the president's deficit reduction package as it now stands," said August Busch, chairman of Anheuser-Busch Inc. Breweries. He praised "Clinton's bold approach to reduce the deficit through spending cuts and higher taxes equitably levied."

One of the most controversial features of the package is a broad-based energy tax tied to the British Thermal Unit (BTU) or heat content of fuels which was endorsed by Lou Cook, chairman of Atlantic Richfield Co., a major oil company.

"No one wants to pay more taxes," he told Mr. Clinton. "But it is clear that we must begin paying for today's needs today and quit borrowing against the future."

The U.S. government's total borrowings, which are approaching \$4 trillion, drain government resources as interest on the debt mounts.

"The concept of a BTU tax on

Business, labour applaud Clinton's economic plan

energy and an increased corporate income tax are essential to the success of the president's plan, and we support them," Mr. Cook said.

A note of scepticism was sounded by Ford Motor Co. Chairman Harold Poling on tax increases, but otherwise Mr. Poling said there is widespread support for a change.

He expressed concern that the tax increases could limit the recovery and said "it is essential that spending cuts be approved at the same time as the tax programme."

Mr. Clinton told them that cutting the budget deficit was crucial to long-term economic health and disagreed that the plan's spending cuts and tax hikes would set the economy back.

"I am convinced that is wrong

because of the vast accumulated debt," Mr. Clinton said.

Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO union umbrella organisation said the Clinton plan "sets the country on the right course for the future," adding the economy stimulus plan would provide necessary jobs.

Mr. Clinton insisted his plan would build long-term economic recovery, aided by reductions in long-term interest rates.

And in a reference to critics of his short-term stimulus programme, which would spend about \$30 billion, Mr. Clinton said he would not abandon it.

"I think the stimulus is important, and I will continue to support it," Mr. Clinton said. Action on the stimulus has now been scheduled for after Congress enacts spending cuts and tax increases.



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Yeltsin urged to take offensive against conservative parliament

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin came under growing pressure from allies Friday to take the offensive against Russia's conservative parliament as a deadline for a power-sharing deal with the legislature passed.

The editor of one major liberal newspaper said Mr. Yeltsin should press for elections to break the deadlock.

"Yeltsin, in whom we invested such hopes, is not in control of events. We see no understanding for the state of affairs and no considered strategy," Vitaly Tretiyakov, chief editor of Nezavisimaya Gazeta newspaper, wrote in a commentary.

At Kremlin talks on Feb. 16, Mr. Yeltsin and parliamentary chief Ruslan Khasbulatov formed a commission to draft a constitutional settlement within 10 days. Mr. Yeltsin said if the commission succeeded, he was ready to drop the referendum idea.

Since then, there has been no progress and parliament has snubbed Mr. Yeltsin's proposals.

First Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Shumeiko was quoted by ITAR-TASS News Agency as saying Mr. Yeltsin must go ahead with a planned constitutional referendum if parliament and presidency failed to reach an agreement.

"All power in the country has passed into the hands of the Congress of People's Deputies (the supreme legislature)," Mr. Shumeiko said. "I no longer believe a compromise is possible with parliamentary deputies."

Close aide to Mr. Yeltsin and media chief Mikhail Poltoranin said there was no doubt the referendum would go ahead and

described it as the last chance of a peaceful settlement.

"The legislature cannot ride like a steamroller over Russian statehood," he said.

Critics, including Mr. Khasbulatov, insist the referendum, far from sorting out the division of power between the Congress and the president, would only fan political conflict in Russia.

A presidential spokesman said Friday the passing of the deadline did not mean the end of all hopes for compromise.

"The important thing is that working contacts take place every day. We'll see what comes, but the talks are hard."

Mr. Khasbulatov, a man with little popular support but strong influence in provincial power structures, has curbed Mr. Yeltsin's executive powers to the point where one presidential aide compared him recently with Britain's Queen Elizabeth.

The comment was exaggerated, but Mr. Yeltsin faces serious problems in resisting attempts by central and regional legislatures to claw back powers he has given up to his reformist reforms.

Mr. Yeltsin was directly elected to the newly-created presidency in June 1991 without clearly-defined executive powers. Russia has failed so far to adopt a post-Communist constitution setting out the roles of legislature and judiciary.

The legislature firmly controls the budget, the Central Bank, the appointment of several key security ministries and administers state property through parliamentary agencies.

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ers as the supreme organ of state power at the next session by voting to make government subordinate directly to parliament, which was elected in 1990.

It could also vote to call off the April referendum, even if no powersharing agreement is reached by the commission.

The smaller standing parliament meets next week to set a date for the Congress, which is expected to meet in early March.

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SOUP KITCHEN: Bosnians line up at a soup kitchen in the centre of Sarajevo. U.S. President Bill Clinton proposed a food airdrop into Bosnia-Herzegovina with control of the operation retained by the United Nations (AFP photo)

N. Korea rejects new IAEA demands

VIENNA (R) — North Korea Friday rejected fresh demands by the United Nations nuclear watchdog to open up two of its military sites for inspection, branding the move a serious violation of its sovereignty.

North Korean delegates who attended talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors in Vienna said the body was openly siding with Pyongyang's adversaries and was in danger of losing its impartiality.

"That is why our country is being forced ... to adopt self-defensive measures to safeguard our sovereignty," the North Korean delegation said in a statement.

The statement did not specify what measures Pyongyang would take.

The IAEA board of governors, which includes representatives from 35 member states, Thursday gave North Korea one month to comply with its demands to allow inspectors to visit two sites at Yongbyon believed to be secret nuclear installations.

The IAEA resolution said the board would meet again no later than March 25 to consider North Korea's response. If Pyongyang still refused, the board would consider what it called "further measures."

"Our country will in no way accept this resolution which demands special inspections of two military sites which have nothing to do with nuclear activities," the North Korean delegates said.

North Korea, a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, also agreed last year to sign a "safeguards agreement" which permits inspectors to ensure nuclear equipment and materials are used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

"The adoption of this unjust resolution is a flagrant violation of our country's sovereignty and creates serious difficulties in complying with the safeguards agreement," they added.

Number of Japan gangsters falls after new curbs

TOKYO (R) — Total membership of Japan's crime syndicates fell slightly last year after tough new curbs on their activities, the national police agency said. The number of "yakuza" members fell by 7,200 to 56,600 at the end of last year, an agency spokesman said. The anti-organised crime law, passed last March, gave police new powers to crack down on activities such as extortion. Police previously lacked the power to rein in gangsters without evidence that they had used violence to intimidate victims. Gang leaders have challenged the new law in police hearings, arguing that their groups are traditional organisations dating back hundreds of years. The spokesman said membership of the three largest syndicates increased slightly at the expense of smaller groups last year.

Canada reinstates Victoria Cross for heroism

OTTAWA (R) — Canada will reinstate the Victoria Cross as its highest military decoration, ending a long campaign by Canadian soldiers and veterans of two world wars, the prime minister's office said. The Victoria Cross, awarded for exceptional heroism, was first instituted by Queen Victoria during the Crimean War over a century ago. Ninety-three Canadians received the V.C., the last one awarded posthumously to pilot Robert Gray for an attack on a Japanese destroyer in the last days of the World War II. But Canada dropped the medal in 1972 when it created its own military bravery medals as a further step by the former colony to cut links with Britain. The Canadian Victoria Cross, which has been approved by Queen Elizabeth II, will be awarded for "conspicuous bravery...in the presence of the enemy" and Canadian troops serving as United Nations peacekeepers will be eligible. The campaign to get the medal reinstated was boosted by support from Major-General Lewis MacKenzie, Canada's best-known soldier. He led Canadian peacekeepers who secured Sarajevo Airport last year.

Haitian bishop beaten after mass

PONT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (R) — A prominent Haitian bishop was beaten and kicked Thursday after a funeral mass for victims of a ferry boat disaster turned into the largest demonstration for President Jean-Bertrand Aristide since his overthrow in a bloody 1991 coup.

"Had we not been there, Bishop (Willy) Romeus might have been killed," said Michael Moller, coordinator of a joint

U.N.-Organisation of American States mission that arrived in Haiti 11 days ago to monitor human rights.

Bishop Romeus, a critic of the military-backed government, was thrown to the ground, pummeled and kicked when he left the Port-Au-Prince cathedral after delivering the eulogy. An aide to the bishop said some of the assailants were armed.

Bishop Romeus' glasses were broken, his purple clerical sash ripped and he was repeatedly punched in the face, according to a diplomat who witnessed the beating.

Diplomats and members of the U.N. team jumped between the churchman and his attackers, and diplomats whisked him off in a limousine, first to an unidentified embassy and then to a house used to shelter church figures.

German Reichstag fire still controversial 60 years later

BONN (R) — Sixty years on, historians still argue over who started the fire that gutted Germany's Reichstag parliament building and gave the Nazis the pretext to crack down on opponents.

The fire destroyed the plenary hall on Feb. 27, 1933 — barely a month after Adolf Hitler came to power.

But some insist the fire was set by the Nazis, who needed a provocation to pass the enabling act, which wiped out democratic rights and led to the first roundup of political opponents for the concentration camps.

"Even today it is being disputed whether the fire was an act of arson or if it was staged by the Nazis," the weekly Die Woche wrote in one of several re-examinations of the incident.

The Reichstag, built 100 years ago by Otto Von Bismarck, Germany's first chancellor, is in the limelight again after German unification in 1990.

The neo-classical building, bombed during World War II, was just on the western side of the Communist wall that Berlin in two for almost three decades.

With Berlin restored as capital of Germany, the Bonn parliament will move into the Reichstag within 10 years and an architect's contest for its renovation is drawing to a close.

The 24-year-old Van Der Lubbe

be, who told police he set the Reichstag ablaze to make workers "fight for freedom", was found guilty of arson and guillotined 11 months after the fire.

Most historians today believe he acted alone, although Hitler's court suggested he had unknown Communist partners.

But some insist the fire was set by the Nazis, who needed a provocation to pass the enabling act, which wiped out democratic rights and led to the first roundup of political opponents for the concentration camps.

Walther Hofer, retired director of the University of Bern's Institute of History, said the arrest of thousands of opponents within hours of the fire indicated careful planning.

Hofer, co-publisher of a book about the fire, said the fact the court had to acquit four Communist co-defendants because they had perfect alibis showed the Nazis made up the charges.

He said technical investigations in 1970 had shown one man could not possibly have ignited the wood-panelled plenary hall in the limited time Van Der Lubbe had.

"It would have been impossible to turn plenary hall of 11,000 cubic metres into a flaming sea within a few minutes with the equipment at hand," he told Die Woche.

U.S. historian William Shirer, author of *The Rise and Fall Of The Third Reich*, believed the Nazis had learned of Van Der Lubbe's arson plans from his barroom boasting about his revolutionary exploits and doused the plenary hall in advance to ensure it was completely destroyed.

"The coincidence that the Nazis had found a demented Communist arsonist who was out to do exactly what they themselves had determined to do seems incredible but is nevertheless supported by the evidence," he wrote.

Court records quote Van Der Lubbe as saying he ignited the fire with matches and charcoal fire starters but neither the Nazis nor their opponents supported this notion.

"The Communists were convinced the Nazis had set the fire," German historian Fritz Tobias, who believes Van Der Lubbe acted alone, told Die Woche.

"Experience shows that lone perpetrators in sensational attacks are always regarded with suspicion," he said. "People find it hard to accept that a man without a name is capable of interfering with big politics at his own initiative and changing the course of history."

Girl can 'divorce' mother — U.K. court

LEEDS, England (R) — A 12-year-old girl who sought to "divorce" her mother may stay with her foster family, an English High Court judge has ruled. Lawyers said the girl, who cannot be named, could be the youngest child in Britain to make use of a law passed in 1969 allowing her to seek another home. The case attracted attention last year when the girl, then aged 11, tried to legally "divorce" her mother. Proceedings were later dropped when lawyers acting for mother and daughter agreed that local authorities should take over the case. On Tuesday, a High Court judge in the northern English town of Leeds ruled the girl could stay with foster parents who had taken care of her from the age of three months until she returned to her mother at the age of eight.

COLUMN JOURNAL

Madonna pictures bring slap on wrist

TOKYO (R) — A Japanese firm got off with a light fine Friday for defying local obscenity laws by not retouching nude pictures in Madonna's book *Sex*. Tokyo customs officials ordered Toppan Printing Co Ltd to pay a fine of almost 100,000 yen (\$850) for skirting Japanese censors and printing the original photographs in the Japanese-language version of the book.

The first batch of 150,000 copies sold out last Dec. 1 when it reached Japanese bookstores. "We accept the decision and promise to be more careful in the future," a Toppan Company official said.

Toppan imported negatives of the sexually explicit, sado-masochistic photographs that fill *Sex* without filing a required report to customs authorities. In October, customs officials at Tokyo's Narita Airport held up imports of the American edition of *Sex* to scratch out all glimpses of pubic hair. Japan's bizarre censorship laws prohibit pictures showing pubic hair and genitalia but place no restraints on graphic scenes of sexual violence, including child rape and bestiality. Over the past year, authorities have begun to bow to demands from publishers and artists to permit the depiction of pubic hair, particularly when it affects artistic expression.

In the past, one woman has usually been appointed to the 24-member cabinet, as the second state minister for political affairs, specialising in issues pertaining to women, children and the elderly.

Mr. Kim appointed a woman again to that post, Kwon Young Ja, 56. Ms. Kwon currently serves as head of the government-supported Korean Women's Development Institute and was formerly an outspoken journalist active in women's social welfare issues.

But Mr. Kim's selection of two other women to the cabinet came as a surprise.

Hwang San-Sung, 49, a lawyer, television commentator and former judge, was named minister of the environment. She has been an advocate of the equal rights movement in Korea.

Park Yang-Sil, 58, an obstetrician, was named minister for health and social affairs.

Dr. Park has led a movement to help Vietnamese children fathered by South Korean soldiers during the war in Indochina. She also has been active in anti-nuclear and equal rights movements as the head of the Association of Korean Women Doctors.

U.S. police raid suicide doctor's home

JOHANNESBURG (R) — The radical black Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) said Friday it would never accede to government demands that its armed wing suspend the struggle against white rule in South Africa.

"The government wants APLA to go on a 'holiday,' that is not going to happen," said PAC Western Cape official Andile Ntsoalo, referring to what he said was the first item on the government's agenda at forthcoming talks with the black radical group.

Monday's discussions,